1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

extensive, have been the social changes which have resulted from this disturbance of the oecological equilibrium. Since bride-wealth consists of cattle there must have been for a time considerable dislocation of marriage arrangements, but stability has been reached to-day by lowering the number of cattle which have to be paid. A like assessment on a new footing does not seem to have been achieved in homicide negotiations, in which there is not the same goodwill between the parties as in marriage, and blood-wealth appears to have been claimed up to the present time at the old rate of payment, though Nuer recognize that bride-wealth and blood-wealth should rise and fall together. One cannot make any precise statement on the matter, but it is likely that feuds were less easily concluded than before and that consequently tribal relations were affected. It may also be supposed that decrease in stock has led to a general deterioration of the standard of living, for climatic conditions do not allow adequate compensation by expending further labour on horticulture. No doubt Nuer grew more millet than before, but they must have suffered a decrease in their total food-supply and, above all, in security. It will be seen in a later section that Nuer can no more exist on a purely horticultural economy than they can, at any rate since the introduction of rinderpest, exist on a purely pastoral economy. They must have a mixed economy and can compensate on one side or the other only to a very limited degree. Nuer sought to repair their losses rather by extensive raiding of their Dinka neighbours, passing on to them their own losses in stock. We know that Nuer raided Dinka before rinderpest entered the country, but it is likely that their foreign relations have been affected by the greater stimulus to aggression. Other probable effects could be noted, especially in kinship relations, but one can only guess their importance, so we confine our speculations to a few of those that may be supposed to have occurred in Nuer economy and political life.

V

It was noted in Chapter I that to exist Nuer have to make use of a mixed economy, since their herds do not supply them with adequate nourishment. It will be seen in a later section that their millet harvest is often meagre and uncertain. Fish,

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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226 therefore, are an indispensable article of food, and the pursuit of them influences seasonal movements.

226 262 The rivers teem with fish of many edible species which greatly supplement the diet of the Nuer in the dry season and enable them to survive years in which the crops fail or there are epidemics among the herds. In choosing camp sites opportunities [361] for fishing are considered no less than water and pasturage. Nevertheless, Nuer do not regard themselves as a water-people, and despise people like the Shilluk who, they say, live mainly by fishing and hunting hippopotami. In spite of this suggestion of superiority Nuer enjoy fishing and the feeling of well-being a full fish diet gives them. One may judge how great their catch must be at the height of the dry season from the fact that one can see along the Baro and Sobat cattleless fishing camps (*kal*) in which, except for a little grain, goat's milk, and an occasional wild beast, people live on fish alone for several weeks. These are poor people who either have no cattle or have one or two cows which they have placed in the care of richer relatives, for no Nuer would live without his cattle if he could help it, and they are despised as persons of Anuak or Balak Dinka descent. Some Nuer tribes fish more than others, according to their opportunities. Thus Lou country has poor fishing compared with Eastern Jikany which has a network of waterways. Tribes [421] and tribal sections jealously guard their fishing rights, and people who want to fish extensively in a pool must first obtain permission from its owners if they do not want to provoke fighting.

226 221 It is the seasonal flooding, due to the rise and fall of the rivers and the flatness of the country, that allows Nuer to kill fish in such large numbers, for they are carried out of the rivers, where they are little accessible to the simple methods of Nuer fishing, into streams and lagoons where they are more vulnerable. The best months are November and December, when the rivers begin to fall and to drain streams and lagoons, which can be dammed at suitable points and the fish speared in their efforts to break downstream. Fishing from dams is conducted mainly at night, fires being lighted behind the fishers, who fix their attention on a line of withies placed upstream from the dam and hurl their spears at whatever point of the line fish reveal

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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their presence by striking the withies. My friend the late Mr. L. F. Hamer, who took the photograph reproduced in Plate XXII(*a*), about sunrise, reckoned that quite a hundred fish are caught from a dam in a single night. The dams are lowered as the water falls.

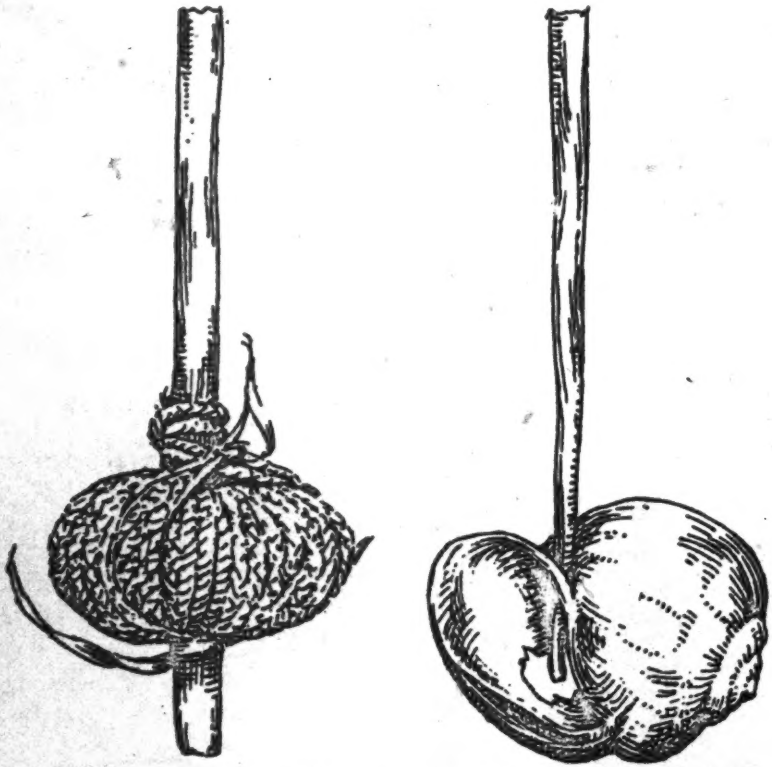

FIG. 10. Instruments for attracting fish.

As the dry season advances a great number of fish are imprisoned in lakes and lagoons from which there is no outlet, and as these dry up they are confined to a smaller and smaller expanse of water and are killed by individual fishers using barbed spears and long harpoons (Plates X and XXII (*b*)), and, at the end of the season, by battues in which gaffs and basket traps may also be employed. Fishing is fairly consistently productive throughout the drought, its yield increasing somewhat in the battue period and rising to a second peak at the

commencement of the rains, in April and May, when the rivers begin to rise again and bring the fish into the shallows where they are easily speared among the reeds and weeds. There is very little fishing—by spear in occasional lagoons—after the Nuer have returned to their villages, for these are mainly inland, away from open water, and the streams are too deep and too infested with crocodiles to encourage fishing. Also, the fish are widely distributed by flood water and protected by rank marsh vegetation. Those Nuer whose villages are on the banks of large rivers sometimes fish from dug-out canoes (Plate IX) with long harpoons, but the Nuer possess very few good canoes —and these they have exchanged or stolen from the Anuak—for they have neither the wood nor the skill to make more than crudely burnt-out vessels of palm and sycamore.

Nuer are fine spearsmen but, otherwise, not very ingenious fishermen. Except for occasional fish spitted with amazing rapidity from the bows of canoes by harpoons and spears as they jump or rise to the surface, Nuer never see their prey, but either hurl their spears at random into likely spots amid weeds and reeds or set up grasses and withies to indicate the presence of fish. A myth recounts that once upon a time all fish were visible to the human eye but that God later made them invisible in the water. The chief Nuer weapon is the barbed spear, though the harpoon is considerably used. When fishing in shallows with spears they sometimes strike the water with a ball of twine or the shell of a giant snail attached to a stick (Fig. 10) to attract the fish. Fish are eaten roasted or boiled.

VI

Nuerland is also very rich in game, though Nuer do not exploit this source of food extensively. There are vast herds of tiang and cob; other antelopes are plentiful; and buffalo, elephant, and hippopotami abound. Nuer eat all animals except carnivora, monkeys, some of the smaller rodents, and zebra, and they kill the last for its skin and tail in the south of Lou country, where it roams in the dry season. Lions abound, especially to the west of the Nile, and are a serious menace to the herds, but Nuer only kill them and leopards, the skins of which are worn by chiefs, if they attack cattle in kraals or grazing grounds, as

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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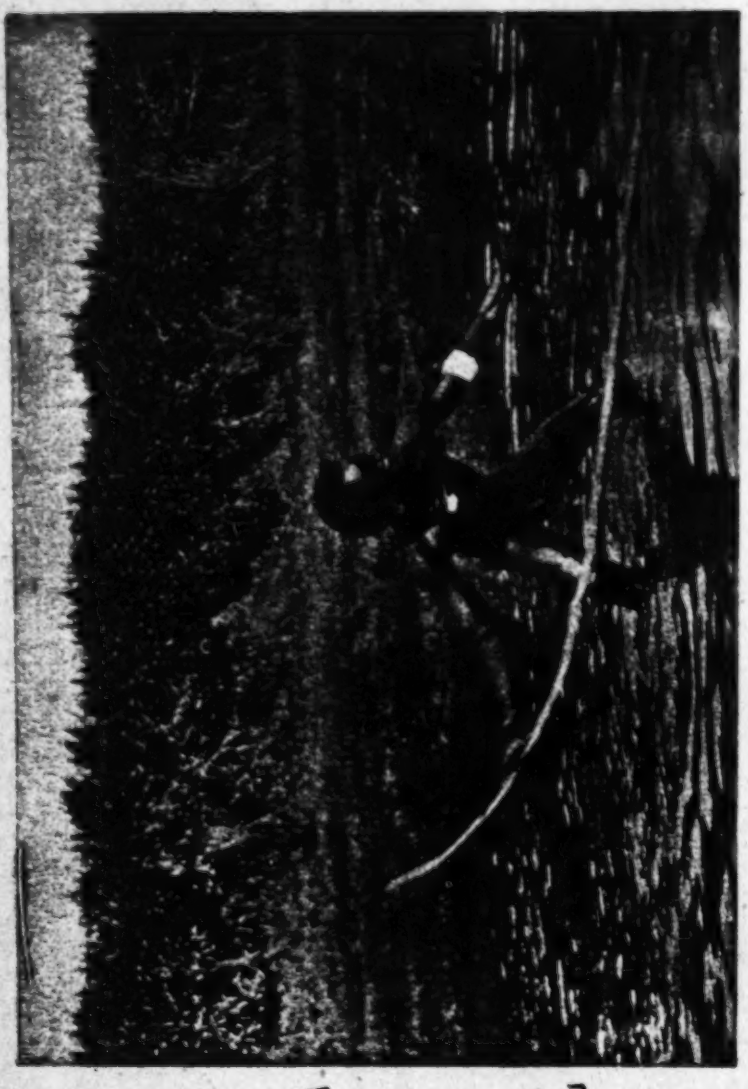
PLATE X

226



Harpoon-fishing in shallows (Sobat river)

[Face p. 78]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE XXII

312
226

a. Spearing fish from dam (Eastern Gaajok)

226

b. Harpoon-fishing in Lake Fadei (Lou)

[Face p. 210]

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

XIII.

Although there is more food in the rains the young men prefer the dry season for they can then spend all day in close association with their comrades and there is plenty of opportunity and leisure for dancing, flirting and displaying themselves before girls from other villages. In the dry season also people can sleep outdoors in the open air with their cattle, for there are few mosquitos. The dry season is also the time for fishing in pools, rivers, and lagoons, and this occupation gives amusement as well as providing tasty and nourishing food. Tiop told me "When the north wind blows at the end of the rains the young men rejoice because the windy season has come. Now they can sleep outside and there are no mosquitos. Now the whole land is burnt and a man can see over the countryside in every direction. Now a man can go out fishing by himself and may be he will not return to camp at night but will sleep on the river-bank. Now they drive the cattle to distant pastures. Only the old men prefer the rains because their bellies are then filled with millet and maize and beer: but the young men rejoice when the north wind blows."

A Western Nuer said "The dry season is good, for then you kill hippopotami and animals of the open plains, and there is the *dompiny* dance and flirting with the girls and jumping and singing behind your oxen. The wet season is good also for then there is plenty of millet, food and beer. Both seasons are good."

As camp life is not everywhere exactly the same it is easier for me to describe the life of members of a section of the Lou tribe who collected at Yakwac on the Sobat River in 1931, as they do every year, and to make comments which will denote certain differences between the mode of life I observed during a lengthy residence there and modes of life observed at dry season camps in other parts of Nuerland.

Camp life is monotonous and drives an anthropologist to despair as nothing unusual happens. Nuer are not eager to fight at this time of the year and marriage, mortuary, and initiation ceremonies are normally held during, or at the end of, the rains, when millet and beer are plentiful. I have spent weeks in camps watching the same daily round. A description of one day serves for any day.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

512 About noon youths and maidens bathe in the river wherever a shallow sandy stretch offers a clear playground. They do the same •726 at inland lakes but much time is there given also to fishing. The young people sit and splash in the water and the sexes flirt and wrestle 883 in and out of the water. At about 2.30 they return to the camp where the girls churn the morning milk and pound and grind millet for the evening meal. The men turn over the drying dung with their sticks and then, having nothing more they need attend to, most of them return to their windscreens though one or two youths may try and spear fish in the shallows and they are joined there by older boys who are not herding the calves.

512 About 4-30 p.m. the small calves are brought from the shade 233 where they have spent the day and are tethered in the kraal. The men hold them between their legs and lifting up their heads compel 237 them to swallow water. At this time the boys bring back the larger 372 calves and goats and sheep from grazing. Members of each household tether their animals. Generally one or two men now go out to meet (*luor*) the returning herd. Others gather the dried dung on hides from the heaps into which boys have swept it, and each owner of a windscreen makes up the evening fire on his hearth. There is no need to light the fires as they have been smouldering all day long and it is only necessary to clear away surface ashes and heap the new fuel on the exposed embers. Dense clouds of smoke arise and envelope the camp.

512 By 5 o'clock cows which have recently calved come running 233 home and herald the approach of the herd which appears from 15 to 462 30 minutes later. Adult men tether the cattle of their household 264 and women and boys commence at once to milk the cows and they finish this work before sunset. The women then prepare the evening meal and finish their dairy work. The men sit in their windscreens and await the meal which is served between 7 and 8 p.m. Nuer eat twice a day: in the morning and in the evening. The evening meal consists of millet porridge, with cheese or butter, or both, poured over it. The morning meal is generally the remains of supper heated up or with hot milk poured over it.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

vary much from month to month for there are few seasonal changes at this time of the year. As the river falls it is possible to fish in lagoons and shallows and to bathe on its sandy bed. Then the lagoons dry up. When the river rises fish swim in the weeds and rushes and along some streams they are easily speared from the banks. The banks of the Sobat are too steep for this purpose. There are no longer shallows and bathing is a hasty dip for there is danger from crocodiles. The grazing grounds are changed from time to time as they become exhausted and as streams and lagoons dry up. At Yakwac there was succulent pasturage only where marsh plants still retained their moisture at the river end of lagoons. The people are still in camp when the first rains fall at the end of April or early in May and then there is everywhere an abundance of pasturage. The brown bush becomes green and the baked fissured earth a sodden mire. Dry lagoons become inland flowing streams. The scorching sun is clouded.

On the Sobat we guessed that the first rains had fallen inland by the migration of wild animals from its banks. Giraffe now left us for inland pastures where they would not have to face death every time they approached the river. Other animals likewise moved southwards, even the gazelle. On the northern bank, however, buffaloes still came to the river to drink and were attacked by hungry Nuer. Animals and men must obey the seasons and when there is no water except in inland lakes and lagoons, men, cattle, and wild beasts must drink at the same places. One can hear them at night cautiously coming to the pools to drink. When the rains come all leave for new pastures.

In May one knows that the move back to the wet season villages will shortly take place not only by cloudy skies and movements of game, but also by camp activities. The women are the first to leave camp and one meets them along paths, carrying their household goods in rectangular cane baskets. Youths leave camp early in the morning to cut stakes, generally of thornwood (*bwan*) and they spend a large part of the day shaping them into tethering pegs. They also twist new cord. The weather being cooler people do not feel so keenly the need to sleep towards noon. Everyone is becoming restless and

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

where strangers are only allowed on sufferance, is a particularly serious infringement of grazing rights, and one which raises a storm of protest quickly followed by blows. Disputes of this nature do not usually start on a tribal scale; the initial quarrel arises between two adjacent cattle-camps near the boundaries, but feelings of indignation may extend along the lines of segmentation until two large segments or even two tribes are ranged against each other. Rights in grazing are recognized and follow the lines of the segmentary system, but are not a constant source of friction. Violation of these rights in years when it was necessary to guard them almost invariably led to hostilities in the past. Nowadays, though fights are not infrequent and boundary disputes are a common cause of blood-feuds, disputes of this nature are often settled peacefully in the courts.

Water Rights

Rights in watering places cannot be treated except in relation to grazing. In the dry season it is the availability of water which largely determines the extent to which certain pastures within the territory of the tribe or the tribal segment are used. This applies particularly to those Nuer tribes who are unable to reach perennial rivers like the Zeraf, Bahr el Jebel, or Sobat. Disputes over pools, especially in dry years when they dry out early in the year, often arise and may lead to bloodshed. Water rights, however, follow the same principles which govern the division of territory according to the segmentation of tribal structure. Shallow wells are sometimes sunk, and are the property of the individual who digs them, but subject always to his obligation to share with his kinsmen and neighbours.

Fishing Rights and Hunting Rights

Fishing rights go with the divisions of territory in which the fish pools are situated and are guarded with perhaps a greater intensity of feeling than are rights in land. Fishing in the riverain area is essentially a dry season occupation, and there are fishing pools or stretches of shallow rivers and watercourses attached to and situated within grazing areas. Fishing is also a collective activity, and the right of the individual is limited by his membership of the tribal segment to which the pool belongs. Fishing again depends largely on the climatic conditions prevailing. A season of heavy rainfall followed by an abrupt drop in levels in the rivers and their tributaries is usually the ideal. Fish have been able to move far upstream during the rains, but are prevented from returning to the deeper waters of the main channels and are concentrated in depressions and pools shallow enough for the people to spear them. In such circumstances fish are not scarce, and pools

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

farther afield may be abandoned for the time being. Other people whose opportunities for fishing may not be so great as their neighbours' may utilize the less accessible pools unmolested, but should climatic conditions cause scarcity elsewhere their owners will demand the right to use them to the exclusion of other people.

Hunting rights are also defined by the limits of recognized tribal or segment territory, but since the Nuer are not very active hunters there is no clear definition, and quarrels rarely arise. There are rules governing the division of the flesh of wild animals killed in collective hunting, though they are rarely followed without argument. The division of meat in these circumstances often leads to violent quarrels but is not a subject which reaches the stage of litigation in the courts. Ivory, a very valuable commodity in Nuer eyes, not because of its market value but because it is the ambition of most Nuer to own an ivory bracelet, is subject to more definite rules. The right tusk must always go to the first spearer, the *ran me koic e-je*, the left tusk to the second spearer, the *ran me gam e-je*. Others who take part in the hunt, even if the wounds they have inflicted have been much more deadly than those of the first two spearers, get no more than their share of the meat. Those who get the tusks must divide them among their kinsmen according to principles similar to those which govern the distribution of bridewealth cattle. The central portion must be given to the *gwan buthni* of the lineage, this portion being sufficient to make one large bangle; of the remainder a portion must go *kwi gwan*, to the father's side, and a portion *kwi man* (or *nar*), to the mother's or maternal uncle's side. Dead elephants are sometimes found, the ivory going to the first and second finder in the same manner. The right to tusks and the way in which they are distributed are not matters which come before the courts, and there are strong ritual sanctions for observing the correct rules. There is a mystical link between man—that is, Nuer—and elephants, which means that killing them is not only a hazardous physical undertaking, but is also spiritually dangerous. It is something akin to homicide, and special ritual must be performed, including the letting of blood (*birr*) from the first spearer.[1] Nuer also believe that if they ignored the rules of distribution, the spirit (*cien*) of the dead elephant would haunt them and would bring them misfortunes.

Conclusion

Rights in land are therefore collective and follow the segmentary structure of Nuer society. They are recognized and nowadays will be enforced in the courts, and they embrace all types of land necessary to the subsistence economy of the Nuer, but they are not in constant

[1] As in homicide it is the first spearer who is held responsible for the animal's death.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

231 turn into a 'Lat' (a combination of ogre and cannibal which
[776] figures largely in folk-lore tales. Nuer firmly believe in these Lats and fear them).

Nuer, be they men, women, or children love their cattle; they are the pride of the tribe. The people delight in being among them. When a boy has his tribal marks
[551] cut, he assumes an ox name in addition to his own.

[825] The cattle are always supposed to see the new moon one night before the people see it.

If a cow is sick, she is well cared for. Everything possible is done for her so far as the Nuer's knowledge goes. A wasps' nest is soaked in water and the mixture forcibly administered to the cow as a preventive against a certain fever.

A bunch of a certain kind of leaves tied about a cow's neck is supposed to help her if all is not right with her when she has just calved.

Muzzles made out of thorns are fastened on the mouth of a calf when they wish to prevent it from sucking.

The Nuer also have sheep, and numerous dogs may be seen.

[262] During the fishing season when many go to the fishing camps, the Nuer depends upon fish and milk for his food. The cattle are always taken to the fishing camp—for grazing is usually good—hence the milk supply.

THE FISHING SEASON

● 226 When the dry season is on, the river falls fast and the
221 Nuer is eager to fish. The rivers are full of fish, great big ones, including the Nile perch and several other large white fish which are specially desired for food. In December and January Nuer with their cattle move from the villages to the fishing camps. They build (Fig. 6)
[302] bee-hive-shaped houses—even the walls are of grass.

The women and children sleep in these; the men sleep in the barns, if there are any, or among the cattle. 226 221

People under one chief spend the fishing season at the same fishing camp. Old people sometimes remain in the villages, but the younger ones enjoy the companionship of others and the change from the routine village life. It serves the same purpose as our summer trip.

While at the camp, fish are caught by spearing them with a special spear or by a hook and line left out all night as a trout line is sometimes left, or by the use of a fishing net, if any one is fortunate enough to possess one. 226

Later on, when the river is lower, fish traps are made by placing sticks close together in the river. When fish get into this enclosure they are unable to find the exit and are speared and taken. Nuer sometimes imitate the sound of fish by making a splashing noise in the water with a stick. Other fish gather, as they think, to where their fellows are, and are speared.

If many fish are caught they are dried and taken back to the village for later use, or possibly they are sent back at once to those who have stayed behind. Sometimes fish are not plentiful and then return trips have to be made to the villages to get dura for food. [251] ✓

When the river begins to rise, fishing in the swamps may be continued for a little while. But soon all return to their villages, for as soon as the rains start, hoeing must be done and dura planted. Also, should their permanent village be across the river from the fishing camp, they must take their cattle over the river before it rises so much that the cattle are unable to swim it in safety. 226 221

THE FOOD-SUPPLY

The Nuer food-supply is frequently limited in quantity; it is also limited in variety. The foods the Nuer will eat 262